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ABSTRACT

Each year, California's Los Rios Community College District develops a profile of current students to provide data on student demographics and enrollment trends. Data are drawn from fall fourth week census reports issued to the three District community colleges each September. Data collected for fall 1996 indicated the following: (1) after a 3-year decline beginning in 1991, enrollment stabilized in fall 1994, declining by less than .02% from the previous year; (2) between fall 1995 and fall 1996, enrollment increased by 3.5%, the first annual increase since 1990; (3) although weekly student contact hours decreased each year from 1992 to 1994, they increased by 3.2% between fall 1994 and fall 1995; (4) the proportion of ethnic minorities in the District's student body increased from 28% in 1986 to 40% in 1996; (5) in fall 1996, White students comprised 56.6% of the student body, Asians 16.1%, Latinos 11.5%, African Americans 10.4%, and Native Americans 2.1%; (6) the proportion of students 20 years of age and under decreased from 34% of enrollment in 1978 to 26% in fall 1996, while students ages 30 and over increased from 30% to 39%; and (7) in fall 1996, 41.7% of students were taking fewer than 6 units, 30.7% were taking between 6 and 11.9 units, and 27.6% were taking 12 or more units. (HAA)

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Fall 1996 Student Profile
Based upon Fourth Week Census Data

Judith A. Beachler

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Los Rios Community College District
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FALL 1996 STUDENT PROFILE

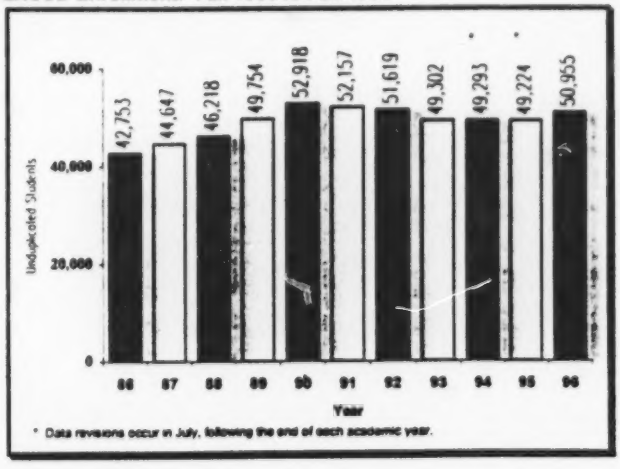
Based upon Fourth Week Census Data

October 1996

This is the seventh in a series of Los Rios Community College District (LRCCD) student profiles. These annual summaries provide the District and its colleges -- American River College (ARC), Cosumnes River College (CRC) and Sacramento City College (SCC) -- with data on student demographics and enrollment trends—important information for successful planning to meet the needs of our changing student clientele. This report presents student enrollment data and Weekly Student Contact Hours (WSCH) based on the official Fall Fourth Week Census reports that are issued each September. It is also based upon demographic data generated from the official Fall Fourth Week Census research database. Analysis of demographic data since Fall 1993 includes *all courses* which have started as of the fourth week of classes, in addition to all full-term and first nine-week offerings.

District Enrollment

Chart 1
LRCCD Enrollment: Fall 1986 to Fall 1996



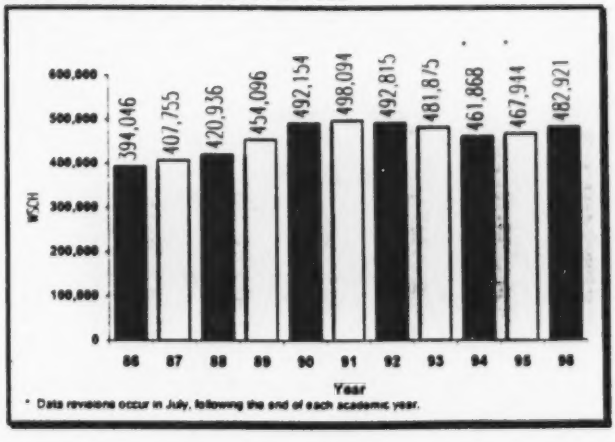
The cyclical enrollment pattern shown in Chart 1 tends to reflect variations in state funding and school-age population trends. Fee increases which took effect in 1993 probably contributed to the rather large enrollment drop for that year. During the three-year decline through Fall 1993, new enrollment management decisions were put into effect as efforts to stabilize enrollment. These efforts were successful. In Fall 1994 enrollment declined by less than 0.02% (9 fewer students), and in Fall 1995 by only 0.1%, (69 fewer students). In Fall 1996, enrollment increased 3.5% over the 1995 levels, the first annual increase since 1990.

Enrollment declined slightly by .5% in Fall 1996 at ARC (to 20,309). It increased by 11.7% at CRC (to 12,807) and by 2.8% at SCC (to 17,839).

CRC's enrollment total includes the El Dorado and Folsom Lake centers. Fall 1996 enrollment at the El Dorado and Folsom Lake centers is 2,223 and 2,196, respectively.

District Weekly Student Contact Hours

Chart 2
LRCCD WSCH: Fall 1986 to Fall 1996



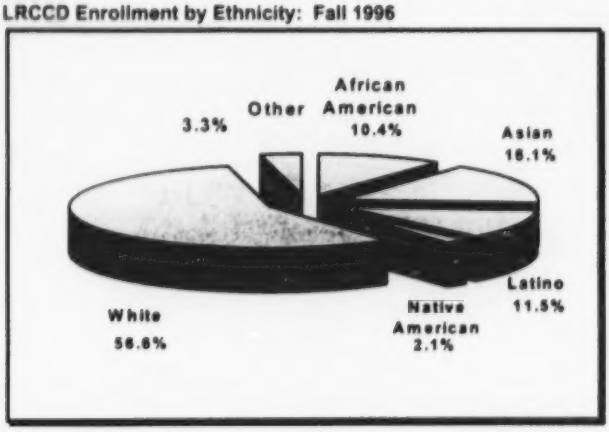
Similar to District enrollment in 1995, Weekly Student Contact Hours (WSCH) increased, but by slightly less (3.2%). As indicated by Chart 2, this is the second annual increase that has ended the three-year pattern of decreasing WSCH that started in 1992. The largest annual decline in

WSCH over this eleven year period occurred in 1994, when the average student took fewer units than the previous year. But WSCH increased by 1.3% in 1995, when enrollment decreased by 0.1%, indicating that unit load was on the rise again. The average unit load has remained relatively the same in 1996.

District Enrollment by Ethnicity

Chart 3 depicts the District's ethnic mix in Fall 1996. The total proportion of ethnic minorities among the Los Rios student population increased substantially over the last decade, from 28% in 1986 to 40% in 1996.

Chart 3
LRCCD Enrollment by Ethnicity: Fall 1996

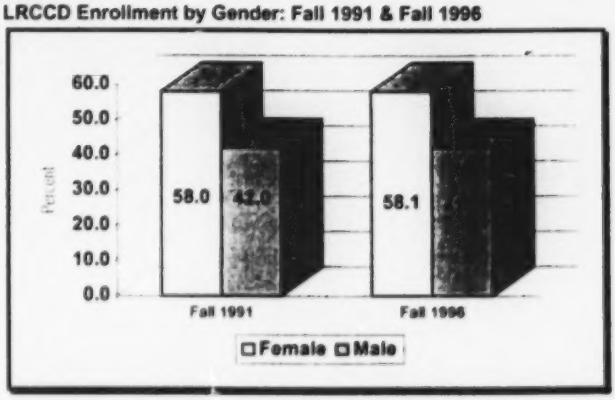


Reflecting similar population trends in the Sacramento region, considerable changes have occurred in the ethnic mix of minority students. As of Fall 1985, Asians replaced African Americans as the largest minority group in the District. In Fall 1996, enrollment of students of ethnic groups continued to increase as a proportion of all students. Asians comprise 16.1% of the Los Rios student body; Latinos comprise the second largest group at 11.5%, followed by African Americans at 10.4%, and Native Americans at 2.1%. White students comprise 56.6% of all students, while the remaining 3.3% include students from various other ethnic minority groups and those whose ethnicity was unspecified.

The proportions of ethnic minority students enrolled at Los Rios colleges are higher than the proportions of ethnic minority adults living in the Sacramento Metropolitan Statistical Area (Sacramento MSA), the colleges' primary service area. The 1990 census data suggest that 24% of the Sacramento area adult population (individuals 18 years and older) is minority.

District Enrollment by Gender

Chart 4
LRCCD Enrollment by Gender: Fall 1991 & Fall 1996



As shown in Chart 4, enrollment by gender in Fall 1996 has not changed much since 1991. The proportion of women increased fairly steadily throughout the 1980s, accounting for more than 75% of the District's enrollment growth between 1978 (when it was 54%) and 1989 (when it reached 58%, an all-time high). The proportions of men and women enrolled at Los Rios colleges has fluctuated less than 1% since 1985.

The proportions of women to men at SCC almost mirrors the District proportions, with 58.2% women and 41.8% men. CRC's proportions by gender are influenced by the patterns at Folsom Lake and the El Dorado centers; CRC enrolls 60.0% women and 40.0% men. The El Dorado and Folsom Lake centers enroll substantially more women -- 68% and 66%, respectively. ARC is the only college enrolling slightly more men than the District average, with 43.3% of its students male and 56.7% of its students female.

District Enrollment by Age Group

Two of the changing age trends evidenced in the District have been a fairly steady drop in the proportion of the traditional 20-and-under age group and an increase in the 30-and-over age group. The proportion of students 20-and-under went from 34% of enrollment in 1978 to 26% in Fall 1996, while students ages 30-and-over increased from 30% to 39% of all students.

Fall 1985 was the first semester in which more than half of enrolled students were over the age of

24. In Fall 1996 54% of all students were 25 or older. Although the eighteen year trend in the District has been toward an older student body, most of the shift had occurred by 1985. Over the past ten years, the proportions of enrollment for each age category have changed by only two percent or less. The age category that is an exception to this is 40-and-over. The proportion of students in this category increased from 14% in Fall 1986 to 19% in Fall 1996. The proportion of students ages 40-and-over grew 2.2% over the Fall 1995 proportions; all other age categories changed by less than 1%.

Chart 5
LRCCD Enrollment by Age: Fall 1991 & Fall 1996

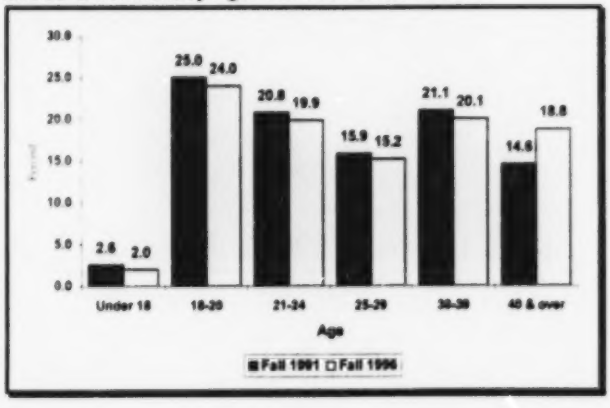


Chart 5 compares the proportion of students in each age category enrolled in Fall 1996 to five years earlier. This trend toward an older and often part-time student body is particularly important in planning for future programs and services.

District Enrollment by Day and Evening

Chart 6
LRCCD Enrollment by Day & Evening: Fall 1991 & Fall 1996

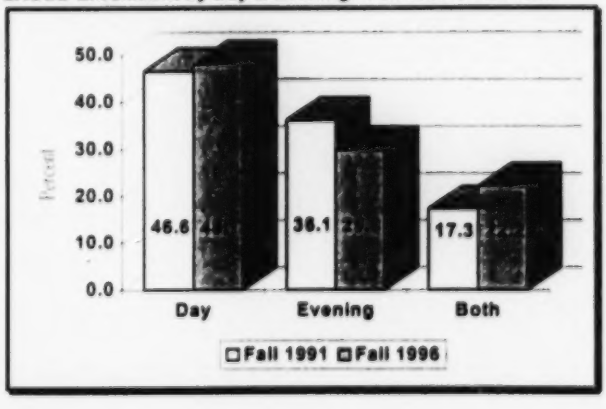


Chart 6 compares the proportions of day and evening attendance for 1991 and 1996. Figures indicate that almost 2% more students are attending courses that are only offered during the day, while 6% fewer students are attending courses that are only offered during the evening. There are almost 5% more students in Fall 1996 who attend *both* day and evening courses than there were five years earlier.

At each of the District's colleges, attendance patterns have varied over the last six years. The proportions of students taking courses during the day, only, have remained relatively stable at both ARC and SCC (increasing from 49% to 50% at ARC from 1991 to 1996 and declining from 53% to 52% at SCC). But there has been a marked increase in the proportions attending only day courses at CRC (from 33% to 39%). The proportions of students who take courses only offered during the evening have decreased at all three colleges: from 36% to 28% at ARC; from 48% to 37% at CRC; and from 29% to 25% at SCC. The proportions taking *both* day and evening courses have increased at all three colleges -- from 16% to 22% at ARC, from 19% to 24% at CRC and from 18% to 23% at SCC.

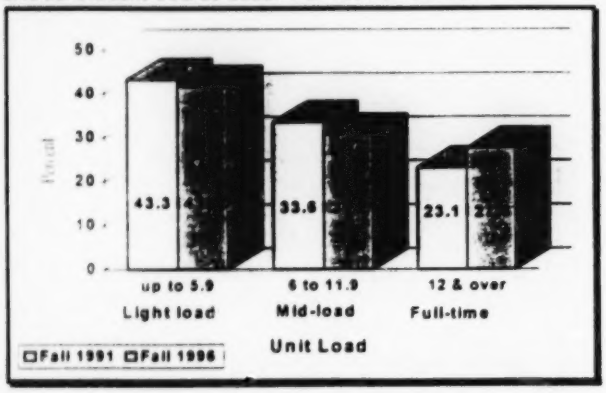
In Fall 1996, almost half (48%) of all Folsom Lake Center students attend evening classes, only; at the El Dorado Center 39% do. This varies greatly from ARC and SCC where approximately half of the students attend day classes, only.

What is uncertain, however, is whether the day/evening attendance patterns reflect *choice* or merely the *availability* of courses. A Spring 1995 survey (Price Research, American River College 1995 Random Survey) of adults residing in communities served by ARC indicated that potential students who were not yet attending ARC would be interested in having more evening course offerings. Likewise, 11% of the non-returning students who responded to the LRCCD Follow-up Survey in 1995, indicated that they did so because their job hours conflicted with college or that course availability was a problem. The three Los Rios colleges may wish to consider expanding course offerings at non-traditional times to meet the needs of these students and other working adults interested in becoming Los Rios college students.

Unit Load by District Students

Three categories of unit-load are used in Chart 7 to demonstrate the District trends in students' course loads over the past. "Light load" students are those taking fewer than six units; "mid-load" students are those taking six to 11.9 units; and "full-time" students are those with 12 or more units. Seventy-two percent of Los Rios students are part-time -- light load and mid-load students, down from 77% in Fall 1991.

Chart 7
LRCCD Student Course Load: Fall 1991 & Fall 1996



From 1983 through 1987 there was a definite shift in the proportion of students taking the lightest load (37% in 1983 to a high of 46% in 1987). Beginning in 1988, the proportion of light-load students began a gradual downward trend to 41% in 1995; the proportion of light load students increased slightly (by less than 1%) this year. The proportion of mid-load students has remained relatively constant since 1978. Approximately 31% were mid-load students in Fall 1996. The proportion of students taking full-time loads increased from 23% in Fall 1991 to 28% in 1995.

Shifts in unit load have been of great importance because funding for student services was for many years based on full-time equivalent students (FTE). Under this funding formula, light and mid-load students were not counted individually even though they required individualized student services. The funding formula implemented as part of the AB1725 reform package does include a "head count factor" for student services; however, funding is currently at only 52.7% of the agreed-upon standard for student services, so the strain on this portion of the colleges' funds continues.
Among the District's colleges, Sacramento City College has the greatest proportion of full-time students (33%) in Fall 1996. American River College has 27%, and Cosumnes River College has 25%. The El Dorado and Folsom Lake centers have 22% and 14%, respectively. Clearly, all of the colleges are still predominantly part-time institutions.

Conclusions

The data presented in this report show that enrollment stabilized in Fall 1994 after a three-year period of decline and finally increased in 1996 by 3.5% over 1995 figures.

Longer term demographic trends continued in Fall 1996. The proportions of ethnic minorities in the student body continued to grow while the male/female ratio remained relatively constant. The eighteen year trend toward an older student body continues. Approximately 54% of all students are 25 or older.

It is generally suggested that "funding often drives enrollment" in California community colleges. Historically, these colleges were open to virtually all California residents without charge until Fall 1984, when the Legislature established the first enrollment fee. By Spring 1993, a 67% increase over the most recently set levels, with a "differential" fee of an additional $40 per unit for students already holding a bachelor's degree, was put into effect. This was followed by the Fall 1993 enrollment drop of 5%, much steeper than the 1% decline in each of the previous two years. But it appears that enrollment stabilized in Fall 1994 and may now be on the increase beginning this year. The $40 differential fee for bachelor degree holders was eliminated last Spring. Monitoring and analyzing the trends in student enrollment, demographics and student loads to assess the future impact of funding levels, fee increases, and other factors will be very important for future planning.

This report was written by Judith Beachler, Interim Manager, and is based on data generated from the LRCCD Research Database, developed and managed by Minh La, Systems Hardware and Software Performance Analyst.

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